

Basics; - Texture & Surface Pattern

Creating patterns on the surface of metal sheet or wire is one of the most effective ways to decorate your jewellery designs.

Metal usually needs to be textured or patterned while it is flat, before it is formed into 3D shapes or cut into shapes.

Patterns can be created in many ways, some great ones for beginners include; - Hammered textures

Standard DIY type jobbing hammers can be great to create a simple but effective surface pattern - the rounded end will give a typical hammered dimpled effect, the flat end will just squash the metal if hit straight on, but you can use the edges of the flat face for more pattern options.

You can also buy special texturing hammers available from jewellery tools suppliers - these have patterns carved into the steel heads that will imprint onto your metal.

Experiment with different hammers, as well as using the same hammer in several different ways - hitting straight on, hitting at an angle, creating dense or more spaced out areas of pattern.

Always hammer using a steel block or flat stake as a base, to save your table from damage and ensure you create the cleanest, crispest patterns.

Roller printed patterns

A rolling mill is an expensive investment, but if you have access to one, it can be used to imprint patterns into your metal surface. Designed to compress metal sheet or wire, if you feed in your metal alongside something with a textured surface, this will print into your metal.

Adjust the mill so that it grips your metal and texture firmly, and feed the metal in as straight as possible. You need to feel resistance (that the mill is actually pressing the metal).

Anything you can feel a texture on can be used to print - from sandpaper, to lace, to leaves and feathers, wire shapes, or paper silhouettes.



Tip - Experiment with different techniques on a few sections of scrap metal to see the different effects you can create.



Tip; - Anneal (heat to soften) and then clean your metal before using hammers, punches or the rolling mill to ensure you get a crisp, clean imprint.

Hand stamping (using punches)

Punches and stamps are available in a range of shapes, patterns and images, including text. Smaller stamps are easier to control and print effectively.

The metal should be completely flat for maximum contact between the stamp and metal.

Place the metal on a steel block, hold the punch in place and sharply hammer the punch to make your mark/s,



Drills and abrasives

Patterns and marks can also be created using drills and abrasives such as sandpaper, by drilling only partially into the metal, using different sized drill bits you can create patterns.

By moving different abrasives over the surface you can also create a variety of different, more subtle markings.



Some other methods for mark making and patterns; -

Etching

Using chemicals to selectively eat away the metal surface to leave raised areas and recesses.



Sand blasting

Using compressed air and fine sand particles to give a sand blasted - 'frosted' effect - masking out areas will leave a contrasting pattern of shiny and frosted areas.

Engraving

Either hand engraving using sharp tools, or using an electric engraving tool you can create linear patterns on metal surfaces, as well as engraving dates, text and logos. Alternatives also include laser engraving.



Tip - Try using brass, copper and aluminium blanks for texturing - these are cheaper than precious metals like silver for while you are learning and for testing out new effects. A variety of ready cut blanks can be bought in different metals.